

NSC BRIEFING

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BACKGROUND: POTE SARASIN--PROVISIONAL PREMIER OF THAILAND

The selection of Pote Sarasin, former ambassador to the United States and now SEATO secretary-general, to be Thailand's provisional premier was a clever move on the part of the Sarit army group and the king. Besides being highly competent, Pote has the political asset of having been out of the country since 1952. He thus did not have to take sides in the bitter factional strife which finally led to the overthrow of the Phibun regime. Additionally, because of Pote's close identification with SEATO and his firm friendship for the United States, his appointment is of great symbolical utility in emphasizing the continuity of Thailand's pro-Western position despite the change in regimes. Pote has had wide experience in international affairs, which makes him the ideal man to pave the way for international recognition of the new constitutional government which the regime has promised will be formed after the December elections.

Pote is a lawyer by profession. Born in 1904, he received his secondary education at Wilbraham Academy in Massachusetts and his legal training in Bangkok and London. He speaks fluent English and is highly regarded for his intelligence, ability and efficiency. He was a well-known and successful businessman in Bangkok before he entered government service in 1948 as deputy minister of foreign affairs, which he held until 1950. Later he served as Thai representative to the UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea and in 1952 became Thai ambassador to the United States. Pote served in this post until July 1957, during which time he frequently served as a delegate under

In July, he took over as SEATO secretary-general. SEATO members are reported to be highly impressed with the energy, verve and enthusiasm which he had already begun to put into his work with SEATO.